



# People vs Bytes

By Alastair Thompson

**T**hree days of face-to-face marketing at the Bizzone Business Expo in Auckland this month have left me with some takeaway thoughts on the practice of marketing.

In particular, is there really that much difference between a face-to-face sales situation and the online version? At Bizzone the exhibitor stands:

- vie to stand out amidst a sea of competing claims for audience attention;
- attract with offers of prize draws, claims of ease of use, bright colours and taglines;
- and once a punter ventures within range they are engaged with by stall holders with the objective of getting contact details on file for follow-up sales calls and emails.

Does this sound a little like a banner campaign and a landing page?

Of course there are also stark differ-

ences between the people and the bytes version of marketing. At Bizzone, the sales conversion funnel is all about presentation, person-to-person contact, smiles and personality. Online sales conversion is about interface simplicity/predictability, clarity of messages and tweaking design and placement by trial and error.

But the biggest difference is the instant feedback loop you get with face-to-face contact with customers.

At Bizzone, a pitch is refined immediately via feedback, frowns, puzzled expressions and detection of the lightbulb moments in the face of prospects. Online all you get are bounce rates, drop-off points and tiny percentage moves in conversion rates in A B testing.

Which makes an experience like Bizzone a wonderful sales laboratory.

Which brings me to one of the other key takeaways for Scoop from its Bizzone





## Admedia June, 2010

Page: 16

By: Alastair Thompson

Section: General News

Region: New Zealand Circulation: 1697

Type: NZ Magazines Business

Size: 322.00 sq.cms

Frequency: Monthly

experience - and exposure to several thousand small business owners ...

The big internet presence at Bizzone is the developers; ie, businesses offering e-commerce website solutions, business presentation websites, website design branding, video and logo development. And from the 150,000 websites now listed by NZ web search company NZS.com (also at Bizzone) the number of small business websites is huge.

Clearly having a website is now part of the livery of business, much like having business cards, letterhead and a PO box. But merely having a website, or an animated logo, or video or online presentation strategy, is not enough. If it is to serve as a sales channel, it needs to be able to be advertised.

And here there is a big gap in the online advertising market.

If you are a small - or local - business then it is easy to advertise in print or on the radio. You know where the local community paper is delivered, you know who reads *NZ Fishing*, and the demographics and listenership of Radio Live are readily available. These media also tend to all have direct sales teams and channels.

Online the same businesses currently only find it easy to advertise via search. In

search they can target geography and context and - once their conversion funnel is refined - can scale their sales pipeline.

For these same businesses, direct advertising via NZ-based online media is hard. Producing creative is expensive. Context and geographic targeting is offered only by a few local sites (for a premium), and while niche opportunities can be found, they typically do not scale.

On the publisher size, the transactional costs of small advertising sales make it an unattractive business to pursue.

The question then arises, how to make it easier for small and local businesses to advertise online? Part of the solution will likely be people - someone to take a call and quickly and easily convert customer objectives into online results. The other part will be technology to make this easy.

In a nation of small businesses, the arrival of new product to fill this gap will be a significant step towards unlocking the value in indigenous online media. <<

*InterActive Bytes is compiled by Scoop.co.nz, NZ's leading indigenous online news agency. Send feedback to Alastair Thompson (alastair@scoop.co.nz).*